

Washington Panorama

Can Crippled CIA Make a Comeback?

By EDGAR POE

(Times-Picayune Washington Correspondent)

WASHINGTON — World War II organized Central Intelligence Agency, badly crippled by several years of turmoil, is trying hard to make a comeback.

A strong CIA is vital to all Americans. Every country in the world has some type of intelligence service.

Adm. Stansfield Turner, the director, while acknowledging that the CIA has its problems, stoutly maintains that the agency is regaining its self-respect after wholesale resignations and low morale. The sometimes controversial Naval Academy classmate of President Carter said so in an on-the-record talk before Washington's Overseas Writers.

The CIA stumbled badly during the revolution in Iran. Based on the intelligence supplied by the agency, President Carter on more than one occasion expressed confidence at his news conferences that the Shah of Iran, a proven friend of the United States, would not be toppled.

Although it erred in this instance, which had subsequent world-wide ramifications because of Iran's rich oil reserves, there are qualified persons in the nation's capital who maintain that it is the foremost intelligence operation in the world.

The CIA is most important to the president in formulating foreign policy. Its role is much broader than carrying out cloak-and-dagger assignments. The United States spends billions of dollars for the agency to serve as its eyes and ears around the world. It has its central headquarters at suburban Langley, Va.

Adm. Turner said in his talk that more and more attention is being given to technology. People remain paramount in spying, but satellites and technology are taking over a substantial part of intelligence gathering.

Attorney General Griffin Bell, a

former judge of the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals headquartered at New Orleans, has been delegated broad judicial powers by President Carter in the counterintelligence area.

He is making daily decisions on intelligence techniques that intrude into privacy, electronic surveillance of various forms, mail covers and physical search.

Addressing the CIA on foreign intelligence and the legal system recently, Mr. Bell gave a warm pat on the back to the agency. He said no agency in the government has a higher calling to enable the president to make foreign policy.

Rightly or wrongly, many Americans and friends of this country abroad are convinced that the CIA's intelligence gathering is too open and too publicized. Critics contend that there have been abuses of the executive power, congressional power and sometimes a lack of restraint on the part of the press and courts in connection with the operation of the CIA.

Eight congressional committees and certain of their staff members have access to CIA intelligence. The questions have risen numerous times the past year or more: Is it good or bad for that many people to have access to secret information? Is this an example of democracy at its best or worst in the realm of security?

Addressing the CIA workers at Langley, Mr. Bell told them: "You have a hard job to do in hard times. It has never been more important that you do it right.

"You are our first line of patriots in war and peace. Our nation depends on you, for there can be no adequate foreign policy without an ample intelligence system. You are ennobled for the fact that you must perform without the reward of public recognition, often in the face of high risk."

P. Poe, Edgar
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